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VOL. 1-1 AUGUST 1990

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COMMISSIONED: TO GO FORTH

For almost a decade the strongly soul-oriented, R&B band known as COMMISSIONED has been dazzling the gospel market with hits such as "I'm Goin' On," "Go Tell Somebody," "So Good To Know The Savior," and "If My People." In fact, besides having been named Contemporary Group of the Year for two years by the Gospel Music Workshop of America, they have also garnered attention by appearance on the 700 Club, The Bobby Jones Gospel Hour, and A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. which has aired on national television twice since it's production. In the advent of the enormous success of other gospel artists like " Take Six, " and " BeBe and CeCe Winans," Bob Darden of Billboard Magazine talks about Commissioned as having the same potential to crossover to contemporary pop. Now, with a new record deal in their pocket and all the finesse of The Benson Company's promotion department working toward the band's best interest, Commissioned is ready to make a statement to new listeners all over the country.

Their mission and meaning has always been to "deliver the Gospel through song," but now, as the six member, high-powered urban contemporary band with a generous dash of funk releases it's debut record on the Benson label, the chances of their lyrics being heard on a widescale

are indeed becoming reality. For many years the band enjoyed a continual top spot in national Gospel Music charts. With each of the five previous records Commissioned has ranked in Billboard's top five for Gospel album sales charts, their new album will be distributed to the contemporary Christian music market as well as the Black Gospel market. All of the members -- Michael Brooks, Fred Hammond, Michael Williams, Mitchel Jones, Keith Staten and Karl Reid, are quite excited as the band looks forward to really making a positive impact on today's youth.

Some of the other changes in Commissioned lie in the production of the new record. The band continues to produce themselves and are finding a much more polished sound emerging from the studio. The sound is upbeat and totally "today," with even a tip of the hat to the street sound of rap. But fear not, Commissioned stays true to their signature sound on the new album, continuing to stretch their voices with interesting harmonies and vocal moves that most bands would rather shy away from. The very special ability to blend, to the point of sounding like one voice when singing in unison, is a "Commissioned" trademark. Brooks, who has been involved in the production and songwriting end of the band as well as performance from the start, feels that the band is ripe for national acceptance, and feels good about the various musical influences from which the band draws. He explains, "Gospel music is the only music where every musical artform can be utilized. The music doesn't make it Gospel, the lyrics make it Gospel!"

Contrary to the trend toward what is typically called watered-down lyrics, Commissioned continues straight ahead with their focus on salvation, and a desire to help fellow Christians realize who they are in Christ, as well as all the benefits that salvation entails. Keyboardist/producer Michael Brooks speaks about the full scope of vision this Detroit - based ensemble embraces, and says, "We want to give back to God's people some of what God's given us, and it's time for young men and boys to have some positive role models. Especially in the black community . . .there are not enough young black role models. Some guy riding around in a Mercedes with a bunch of chains on is not the right role model." When asked what he sees as the biggest problem for black youth in America, Brooks explains the myths that are perpetrated by the media, and says, "Not all black youth are running the streets, but it's so much what is portrayed on television. We want to do something about the plight of the black male. If families are to be strong, the male has to be rooted in the Word of God. Although many issues have to be addressed, the main thing is coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Making an impact in this area is the biggest thing we're looking at."

Also apart of the new direction that has come with the Benson deal, is a more concentrated tour schedule. Until the present time Commissioned has been used to performing approximately 40 dates per year, and these mostly during the weekends. Now a much more aggressive attitude will be taken for performing concerts, with touring being the norm.

Besides leading active lives as husbands and fathers, (all but drummer, Michael Williams is married) the band busies itself with activity in their individ-

ual churches, as well as a music workshop that takes place in Detroit each year. For four days the men of Commissioned welcome musicians and singers from all over the country to something they call "Young Artist For Christ." During this time the band teaches people the many aspects of the music industry including songwriting, musicianship, the business aspect, promotion, ministry, etc. At the end of the mini-week, they record an album with input from the songwriters who've attended the event. This year it will place on August 23 -26. For further information call (313) 351-0640.

With the high visibility and past successes of The Benson Company's roster of artists, it is safe to say that the rich, expressive styling and soulful, tight harmonies that have come to be Commissioned's very trademark, will be available in more and more stores and enjoyed by many more fans in the coming years. ■

- Stephanie Bennett

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NEWSBEAT...

There was a big "Mississippi Homecoming," Sunday, July 1, 1990 featuring the **Jackson Southernaires, Willie Neal Johnson and the Gospel Keynotes, the Christianaires**, and the fabulous **Mississippi Mass Choir** . . . Command Records announced the appointment of **Nawonia Lyles** as Director of Radio Promotions and Administrative Coordinator . . . Warner Bros. and Myrrh Records artist **David Mullen** is the first rock artist to win in the "Best New Artist" category in the history of the Dove Awards . . . A&M/Word recording artist **DeLeon Richards** stars on ABC-TV's **Brewster Place**, which co-stars Oprah Winfrey, Olivia Cole, Brenda Presley, Ketty Lester, Oscar Brown, Jr. and John Cathran, Jr. Warner/Reprise artist **Take 6** was selected to perform the theme song for the show. . .A&M/Word will be expanding it's production of Gospel Home Videos. Upcoming productions include those of **DeLeon Richards** and **Milton Brunson and the Thompson Community Singers**. More productions will occur at the annual WLOK radio's **Stone Soul Picnic** in Memphis, TN. Performers to be recorded include the **Richard Smallwood Singers, Douglas Miller**, the **Mighty Clouds of Joy** and **Nicholas**. . .The Mercy Music Group, a division of Vineyard Ministries International announces the creation of it's new recording label, **New Breed Music**. . .Mississippi based **Glorious Records** announces the following releases: **Dr. Mattie Moss Clark and UNAC Choir featuring Rev. James Cleveland, Marvin Winans, the Clark Sisters, Timothy Wright and Richard "Mr. Clean" White; Dr. Mattie Moss Clark and the Holy Feast Choir featuring the Clark Sisters and Timothy Wright; Lawrence London and the Ridgeway Sisters; the Victorians; and David Allen and the Ambassadors for Christ featuring James Moore**. . .Signings: **Darryl Coley** has signed a recording agreement with Sparrow Records. . .Atlanta International Records has signed **Donald Malloy and Rev. Ernest Davis and the Wilmington/Chester Mass Choir** to recording agreements. . .NBC sitcom **Amen**'s star **Clifton Davis** has signed a recording agreement with Benson Records. Also signing with Benson was Grammy, Dove & Stellar awards nominated artist/producer/songwriter **Thomas Whitfield**. . .There is a new concept lighting up the airwaves or urban radio. **Gospel Top 30**, is a high quality, fast paced three hour gospel countdown hosted by **Al "The Bishop" Hobbs**. . .**Dr. Bobby Jones** of BET's **Bobby Jones Gospel** fame, was recently honored in Washington, D.C. by the Women at Work of the National Capital Area.

SOON COMING RELEASES . . .

J.C. & The Boyz	**Untitled**	Broken
Mylon & Broken Heart	**Crank It Up**	Star Song
Michael Peace	**Untitled**	Reunion
Recess	**Discipline of the Groove**	Reunion
True M.C.	**Untitled**	Yo! Forefront
Winans Triangle	**Untitled**	Frontline

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N E W S M A K E R S

La Marida, CA - New First Call member Marabeth Jordan, recently made her debut performance at the groups sold-out concert at the La Mirada Civic Theatre in California. Myrrh Records was on hand to honor Marabeth with a reception after their performance. Pictured with Marabeth, her husband Paul Salvason and their baby Jordan Salvason are: (l - r) Chris Hauser-radio promotions for Myrrh, Dick Bozzi-A&M Records, Ed Goble-Director of Marketing for Myrrh, Bonnie Keen-First Call, Paul Salvason, Marabeth Jordan, Marty McCall-First Call, Jeff Kennedy-concert promoter. Kneeling: Marie Lehman-Marketing Assistant for Myrrh.

Pictured on stage (L to R) Vickie Winans, Sarah Gaines, Marvin Winans and Billy Gaines.

Benson recording artist, Billy & Sarah Gaines, were recently featured at the annual Sunday afternoon Black National Religious Broadcasters (BNRB) Convention. Hosted by Vickie and Marvin Winans, the crowd of over 2,000 enjoyed performances of Billy & Sarah's two #1 songs from their second Benson release, "Always Triumphant" and "How Great His Heart Must Be," and a third single, "Come Drink At My Table," from their self-titled debut Benson release. Billy & Sarah's latest Benson project, Friends Indeed, released in March and features Benson's newly signed gospel recording artist Commissioned on the first radio single, "While You Wait."

TRIPLE CROWN FOR THE SPEERS

The Homeland family recently celebrated with the Speers to commemorate the success of their #1 single, "He's Still In The Fire." Homeland presented the Speers with a triple crown plaque for their accomplishment. "He's Still In The Fire" simultaneously held the #1 position in each of the national southern gospel charts: The Gospel Voice Single Chart, The Singing News Southern Gospel Top 80 Chart, and CASHBOX Southern Gospel Top 40 Singles. The Speers were so thrilled with the wonderful reception of their song, they took time to personally thank many of the individuals who were a part of the song's development. Ben Speer presented commemorative plaques to the songwriter, Tim Hill; each studio musician; radio promoter, Tana Lonon; and Homeland President, Bill Traylor.

DALLAS, TEXAS. Word, Inc. has announced the re-signing of Shirley Caesar to a long-term exclusive recording agreement. WORD has recently released Caesar's newest project, I REMEMBER MAMA. Pictured at the contract signing are: (standing, l-r) Roland Lundy, President/Word, Inc.; Don Cason, Vice President / Word Music Group; Loren Balman, Vice President of Marketing and Creative Development/Word Record Group; James Bullard, Executive Director of Gospel Music/Word Record Group; (seated, l-r) Tom Ramsey, Executive Vice President of Records and Music/Word, Inc.; Shirley Caesar; and Carolyn Sanders, Caesar's manager.

NEWSMAKERS (cont.)

Word recording artist Janet Paschal recently appeared on the Trinity Broadcasting Network's "Praise the Lord" program, hosted by Ben Kinchlow. Paschal's self-titled 1989 recording is nominated for an "Album of the Year Dove Award. Word has just released Paschal's latest recording, 'Language of the Heart.'

Larnelle's performance at the Opening Plenary session of NRB '90 was a rousing success as he and his new back up group Friends preceeded Pat Robertson on the program. Larnelle is pictured (L) during "All In Favor" with Friends, (L to R) Linda Moody, Kendal Jolly, Ladye Long, Andrew White, and (not included) Kirsten Goida.

ACROSS THE NATION...

YOUTH EXPLOSION '90
Sapulpa, Oklahoma

Youth Explosion '90 shook Sapulpa, Friday, June 15, 1990. This one night Concert/Rally was designed to get the youth off the streets. To prove that Alcohol, Drugs & other negative influences are definitely not the solution for today's youth.

Chris Theis, of Fire By Night, was the MC for Youth Explosion. Willis Lewis (formerly of the Platters) a songwriter, arranger, composer, shared his story of overcoming drug addiction and a fatal lung disease while ministering about the joys of being a Christian. Lee Wilson (Mr. Excitement) brought the house down with his unique blend of Christian Comedy & Rap Ministry. Evans & Rhythm ministered to the Youth with their dynamic ability to appeal to all audiences with their superb range of harmony and variety of music!

KEAGGY COMPLETES NEW ALBUM - ***Nashville, TN***

Phil Keaggy, and his all star session band, are celebrating the completion of recording FIND ME IN THESE FIELDS. The album is Keaggy's follow-up to his successful 1988 album titled, SUNDAY'S CHILD.

"Making this record was a great experience," said the Nashville based recording artist, who is best known as a guitarist. "It was a refreshing transition and followup to SUNDAY'S CHILD, especially in terms of the consistency of music involved."

Lynn Nichols once again joined Keaggy in the studio as producer. Keaggy noted, however, that this album is more of a co-production with Nichols and that this album is also an outgrowth of their friendship.

"It became one of the easiest projects I have done," he continued. "There is a freedom that only friends share. Having that freedom in the studio, from tracking to the overdubs right into the mix, gave us room to do all of it very directly and as a result there is more intimacy and fire on this record."

From a production standpoint, FIND ME IN THESE FIELDS is a collaboration of friends; however, the message is straight from Phil Keaggy.

"SUNDAY'S CHILD was a notch above my other album both sonically and vocally. However, this album brings back the center of who I am as an artist. There is more of Phil Keaggy's heart in this album than ever before. I wrote nine of the ten songs, and they reveal more of my emotions."

Fans of Keaggy's guitar playing will not be disappointed. When asked about the ten songs on the album, Keaggy responded, "These are not quick and punchy songs. This time there is some great spontaneous guitar playing, some fun detours. They don't detract from the message of the songs, we just felt like we had the room for that to happen and it sounds great."

MICHAEL OMARTIAN SIGNS WITH MYRRH/WORD

Three-time Grammy winner Michael Omartian has just signed with Myrrh Records, Word's west coast based record label. As a producer, pianist and composer, Omartian's talents cover a wide range.

Neal Joseph, V.P. of Records for Word, commented on the signing by saying, "It is very exciting to once again have Michael Omartian as a Myrrh artist. He has always been a pioneering leader in contemporary Christian music, dating back to his classic releases of the mid-seventies, White Horse and Adam Again. His commitment both to ministry and to musical excellence has long been recognized and respected and we at Word look forward to working together with Michael in both of these areas for the future."

Omartian's first project for Myrrh will be recorded at the new studio the artist is building himself in North Hollywood. The album was scheduled to be released in the first quarter of 1990.

In addition to three Grammy Awards, Omartian's many accomplishments include a 1982 Dove Award for producing the Album of the Year and a 3-M Award for the album **Christopher Cross**. Besides producing for superstars such as Christopher Cross, Donna Summer and Rod Stewart; Omartian is himself an accomplished musician. He released **Conversations**, a Christian instrumental album in 1986 to enthusiastic reviews.

Most recently, Omartian's projects include production on the Jackson's new album, **2300 Jackson Street**, Michael Bolton's album, **Soul Provider**, and Stephen Bishop's latest, **Bowling in Paris.** Omartian also produced Michael Anderson's new release for A&M and is tentatively scheduled to produce some of the tunes for Amy Grant's next project.

SANDI PATTI'S OFFICES CAUGHT AFIRE - *Nashville, TN*

In the early morning hours of Tuesday, April 17th, The Helvering Agency, booking and management offices of Sandi Patti, were destroyed by fire. Investigators have determined that the fire was deliberately set in at least two points inside the structure. A $7,000.00 reward has been offered for information leading to an arrest.

The building was unoccupied during the blaze resulting in no injuries. No damage was reported to adjacent buildings housing merchandising, sound and lighting equipment and tour vehicles.

In a statement to the press, Ms Patti said; "If whoever did this thinks they have gotten us down they are mistaken; they can not take away our memories nor the purpose of our ministry."

Patti's husband/manager, John Helvering, confirmed that the staff will continue to function in a temporary location until a new facility is constructed.

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Of Good
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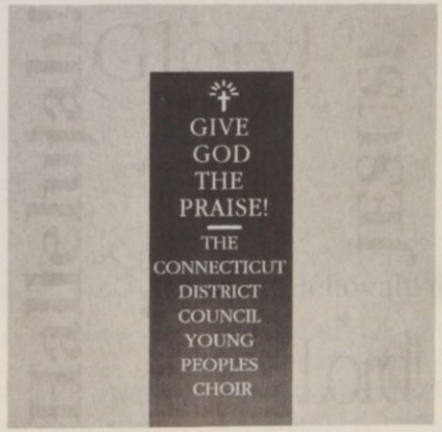
a few stand out from the rest



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THE "PREACHER MAN" SPEAKS

by Marqudi Jackson-Herron

When most children his age were tinkering with toys, he was tinkering with the piano. While most children were strumming balls, he was strumming a guitar. When many his age were merely dreaming, he was dreaming of becoming a Preacher of the Gospel. His musical ministry, once perceived as unique, far out, and even borderline gospel has probably warranted more controversy than any other Gospel recording Artist of our time. Today, however, his music blends harmoniously with that of new and upcoming gospel artists. In this exclusive interview, Rance Allen, talks of humble beginnings he shared with brothers, Thomas and Steve, who make up the Rance Allen Group; his new pastoral objectives as Pastor of New Bethel Bountiful Blessing Church in Toledo, Ohio, and very candidly, discusses the controversy that once surrounded his music.

Praise: Pastor Allen, you started your ministry very early in life. Do you recall when you first gave your life to Christ?

Rance: It is not as vivid as I would like it to be, but I knew there was a change in my life as far back as 7 or 8 years old .. I would get very emotional over preaching of the gospel in church. While other children were sleeping, or laughing, I was really in tune with what was going on in the church. I was at a very young age.

Praise: Were you raised in the Church?

Rance: Yes, my mother was having some marital problems when I was about 4, and asked her mother, my grandmother, to keep me for a couple of weeks while she straightened out her affairs. I just really fell in love with my grandmother and never went back home. My grandmother lived less than 25 yards from my mother. My grandmother was basically the reason why I was saved at such a young age. I was churched, churched and churched from as far back as I can remember.

Praise: I once read, you were five years old when you preached your first sermon. Can you describe this experience for me? How so young?

Rance: Scary! I remember vaguely telling my grandmother while she was in the kitchen, and I was standing up looking at her. She was standing in front of the sink, that was taller than I. I remember telling her I wanted to be a preacher. Like a lot of kids would do, I think I was saying it to get a good response out of her, thinking it would make her real happy. It did, but she took me seriously. From that point, she began to read the bible to me. I was about 4 years old. She would read the Bible to me and she would tell it like most folks would tell their children a Mother Goose story. She taught me, and tutored me, and I was to repeat everything back to her. It was a learning experience.

Praise: How old were you when you began your musical ministry?

Rance: I think around the age of seven. I started trying to tinker around with the piano. My mother was a pianist. She taught me how to play, 'When the Saints Go Marching In.' If I remember correctly it was in F sharp. My interest fell on guitar at age twelve.

Praise: What was it like being a child blessed with so many talents, did it affect your childhood?

Rance: Yes. I don't feel that I had a normal childhood . . . In the Church of God in Christ in those days you were not allowed to play basketball, or some of the things that children were doing. When I became age 15 or 16, I felt like I was being cheated. As I look back, I don't regret it. I don't regret it at all.

Praise: What was it like growing up in Monroe, Michigan?

Rance: Growing up there? I just left there six months ago. Monroe was a town where you found your place and stayed there. I won't say it was a racist town, but blacks stayed on their side of town, whites stayed on their side of town. It was a segregated community. I know this is going to make you laugh but Monroe is getting ready to build their first 8 or 9 story hotel. As soon as I left, things just picked right up! They may have been waiting for me to leave. They just got a mall, maybe a little over a year ago.

Praise: You formed the Rance Allen Group in 1969 with your brothers Thomas and Steve. How was the group formed?

Rance: That came out of the church experience. People talk about going to church every Sunday. We went every night and three times on Sunday. Because of that, you have to find an avenue to keep yourself from being bored, or getting angry because, as children, you had to go so much. So, we really got heavily involved with music. I started

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playing piano. My brother Tom started playing drums and piano, then Steve came on with the bass guitar. We started playing in church together. Because we were in church seven nights a week, playing each night, we had to get pretty good at it. There was a white gentleman that worked at Grinnel's Music Store in Monroe by the name of Larry Giles. I worked at his store. He heard us on a number of occasions at the church. He used to love to come by our church services. One night he asked, "If I put some money behind you guys, would you be interested in putting a single together?" Before he asked, the thought of a singing group had never crossed our minds.

Praise: How old were you when the formal singing group was put together?

Rance: I was 21. Tom was 23, Steve was younger.

Praise: Where was the first show?

Rance: Larry entered us into a contest in Kentucky. We were the only blacks there. I think there were some racial prejudices involved. The first time we went there we won semi-finalist. The second time we were suppose to win some money and some land. I think there was some problem with that. Larry stuck with us, spent quite a bit of time and money but Gospel music is the worst treated music. Because you are a Gospel singer, nobody really wants to open a door for you.

Praise: How did you get to your first recording contract?

Rance: After Larry had spent all of his money, and yet no doors were opened, he entered us into a WCHB talent search. entered us into a WCHB talent search. Bertha Harris, a WCHB radio personality was responsible for getting our application completed. We sang 'Above My Head, I Hear Music In The Air.' We were first place winners. From there, Dave Clark, one of the judges, put us in touch with Toby Jackson who borrowed money from his father, a doctor and took us into the studio where we cut our first album in four hours.

Praise: Pastor Allen, you have always had a very unique style of music, somewhat out of the lines of traditional gospel. Today, however, it blends with that of the more recent gospel artists. Would you say your style of music was ahead of its time?

Rance: Yes. We were innovators, ahead of our time. There's a song on our very last album called 'The Preacher Man' though released in 1985, was actually written in 1973. It was thought to be too far out at that time, to sing about a Preacher who didn't wear a collar, but rather loud suits.

Praise: You recorded, to date, 11 albums. Which is your favorite?

Rance: The very first one, The Rance Allen Group. Also, the latest, 'I Give Myself to You.'

Praise: Which album was nominated for a Grammy?

Rance: 'I Feel Like Going On.' That was a total surprise to us.

Praise: Who is your favorite gospel recording artist today?

Rance: That's difficult. I'll tell you who influenced my singing early in life; James Cleveland, Betty Clark. My favorites of later years are the Clarks, the Winans, Commissioned. I loved their music.

Praise: You are now Pastor of New Bethel Bountiful Blessing Church in Toledo, Ohio. How did this come about?

Rance: By way of a great, great, great man, Apostle G. Patterson, Bishop of Church of God In Christ. He made me understand that I was a Preacher. I'd always been a singer and a preacher, in that order; but he made me realize I am a Preacher, I took to him as my spiritual Father. One day he called and asked, "What would you do if I offered to financially put you in a church and where do you want to go?" I said, "What about Toledo?" So, he came to Toledo, purchased this building and started me as a minister. That's how the doors of New Bethel became opened.

Praise: What do you see yourself doing five years from now?

Rance: Pastoring.

Praise: Looking back over your career. What has given you the greatest satisfaction?

Rance: Being able to make a living doing what I love the most.

Praise: What motivates you in carrying forth the gospel?

Rance: The idea of doing what I enjoy doing. When you see the crackheads, and the guys who thought they were so cool they didn't need the Lord, crying at the altar, "I want to be saved." It makes it all worthwhile.

Praise: Today, our young people are faced with so many problems, problems bigger that themselves; drugs, alcohol, teen pregnancy, high unemployment rates, etc. What message would you give to them?

Rance: This is going to sound like something my grandmother said to me; there's something to the song, 'Give Me That Old Time Religion, It's Good Enough for Me.' The same thing that worked for people in years past, will work for our young people today, Jesus Christ is the answer! Jesus is a habit-breaker. With Jesus, you can conquer drugs, confusion, generation gaps between parents and teenagers. Jesus is willing and able to do all these things. God has blessed me. The children listen to me. They come in off the streets to hear me.

Praise: In closing Pastor Allen, would you quote one of your most favorite scriptures?

Rance: Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

Exterior of New Bethel Bountiful Blessing Church - Toledo, Ohio

LOOKING BACK AT LAST YEAR

Sparrow Records recording artist Tramaine Hawkins sings to the depths of her soul during the recording session of the GMWA Mass Choir held in New Orleans, LA. It should be one hot tune!

Jackson Southernaires member as well as Malaco gospel music division head Frank Williams, is ably backed by the Mississippi Mass Choir on the popular hymn **Near The Cross** off of the choir's hot debut LP on Malaco entitled **Live In Mississippi**. Wiliams and the choir performed on the riverboat **Natchez** in New Orleans, for the GMWA Radio Announcers Guild.

THE CLC YOUTH CHOIR: YOUNG AND DARING

The CLC Youth Choir is a ministry of The Christian Life Center, a 4700 member mega-church, pastored by Rev. Kenneth Haney. Joe Ramirez, broadcaster for KCJH Radio, originally brought the choir to the attention of Kent Washburn, Executive Vice President of Command Records of Hollywood, CA.

"I never dreamed we would sign a choir. But this one was irrestible, totally different and just the right choir," says Washburn. "This is the hottest new choir on the Gospel scene and this is not just another choir album. It is made up of young voices, minds and concepts. The music is energetic and youthful, but at the same time the maturity of their sound is astonishing."

Now, with major label committment, the CLC Youth Choir is starting to explode nationally with their new album **Anchored to the Rock**, produced by Glen Woodward and Aaron Lopez on the Command label distributed world-wide by Word and A & M.

The CLC Youth Choir is also featured in a family-oriented feature length video, "The Nativity," directed by Allen Plone, recently shot in Hollywood. Narrated by the distinguished actor, James Earl Jones, the video will be distributed nationally this fall by Myntex of Minneapolis, Minn.

One reason the CLC Youth Choir is creating such a stir so quickly is that it sounds Black but is acutally a multi-cultural group that defies categorization. It is made up of 50% Anglos, 30% Hispanic and 20% Black youths ranging in age from 13 to 25. It dares to blend the traditional choir sound with rock, R & B and other styles. Incredibly, this innovative 70 voice collective does not come from Chicago to Los Angeles but from Stockton, CA.

"I thought that a multi-cultural youth choir with a soul sound might have difficulty getting a listen," says choir leader Woodward, 25. "I sent the tape to several record companies thinking they would take weeks, maybe even months, to respond. Instead, I heard from four companies with serious interest inside of 72 hours. We chose to go with Command, who closely share the vision."

The idea for the youth choir originated with Woodward, a native of Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Woodward began playing drums and taking guitar lessons while a child, adding bass guitar at age 10. He began playing in church at 16 but truly gave his heart to the Lord at 20. He came to Stockton in 1987 to study music at Christian Life College (a division of Christian Life Center) and soon began working for the church as Youth Music Minister. He also found work as a keyboardist on Gospel records and jingles in Lodi, San Francisco and Stockton.

"The youth of today are my heartbeat," says Woodward. " I felt a youth choir should be based around material to which the kids themselves could relate on a personal level. We started the CLC Youth Choir in the fall of 1987 with about 12 people. During the following summer, in anticipation of the normal summer slump, we held acitivities such as choir workshops and fellowships. We had a such a tremendous time that when the fall rolled around and school started up again, the kids were so excited that the membership leaped to 70 members."

" I decided to take a step forward with them and record an album. I started writing original songs for the choir. I called on a couple of my friends who happened to be some the Bay Area's best and most creative musicians: Joel Smith, bass player with the Hawkins Family; and Aaron Lopez, a local producer/writer who had worked with Vanessa Mitchell, The Hawkins Family and others. That fall, we put out an album called **Fully Committed** on our own custom label. The response was so strong that we knew we were on to something important."

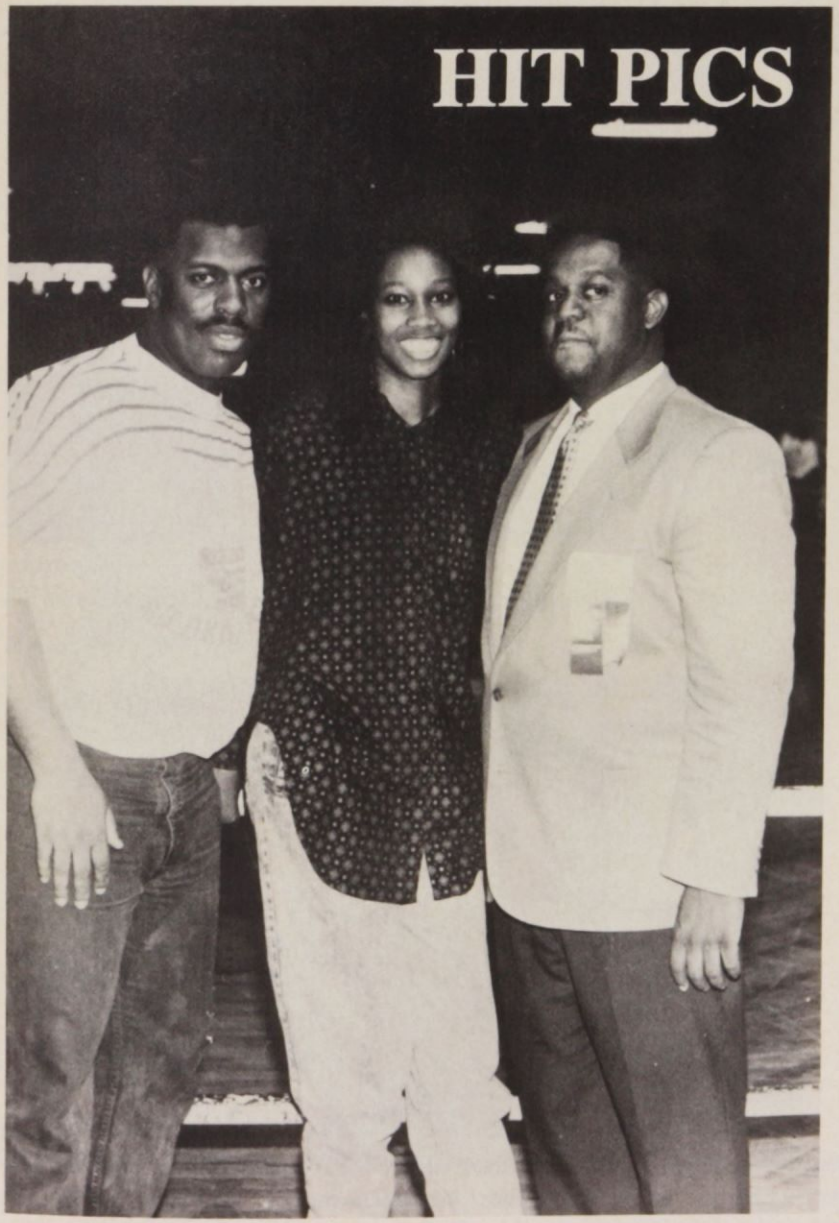
In the summer of 1989, the choir toured, performing for youth ministries wherever they could. "When we returned, we found ourselves being asked to perform as the opening act for the likes of Lynette Hawkins, The Davis Pedigo Group,

Continued on page 37

TOP 40 PLAYLIST

ARTIST	LABEL	NAME OF ALBUM
1. Mississippi Mass Choir	MALACO	Mississippi Mass Choir
2. L. A. Mass Choir	LIGHT	Give Him The Glory
3. Shirley Caesar	WORD	I Remember Mama
4. Jonathan G. & Cathedral	SAVOY	He's Worthy
5. Commissioned	LIGHT	Ordinary Just Won't Do
6. Georgia Mass	SAVOY	Hold On Help Is On The Way
7. Saints In Praise	SPARROW	Saints In Praise, Vol. 1
8. Myrna Summers	SAVOY	We're Going To Make I
9. Clark Singers	WORD	Bringing It Back Home
10. Rev. F.C. Barnes & Comp.	AIR	Can't You See
11. Jackson Southernaires	MALACO	On The Third Day
12. Bsp. J. Banks/Revival Temple	SAVOY	The Storm Is Over
13. Timothy Wright	SAVOY	Who's On The Lord's Side
14. The Winans	QUEST	Return
15. Milton Brunson & TCC	WORD	Available To You
16. Williams Brothers	MALACO	Ain't Love Wonderful
17. Wanda Nero Butler	S.O.G.	New Born Soul
18. Donald Vails & R. White	FAITH	Jesus Paid It All
19. Ron Winans	SELAH	Family & Friends II
20. New Life Community	TYSCOT	Wait On Him
21. Beau Williams	LIGHT	Wonderful
22. Ricky Grundy	SPARROW	Rick Grundy Chorale
23. Gospel Keynotes	MALACO	I'm Yours Lord
24. Vanessa B. Armstrong	JIVE	Wonderful One
25. Edwin Hawkins	LECTION	Face To Face
26. New Jerusalem B.C.C.	S.O.G.	In Worship
27. Mom & Pop Winans	SPARROW	I'm Going Through
28. J. Cleveland/So. Comm. Choir	SAVOY	Having Church
29. Jackson Southernaires	MALACO	What's Wrong With The People
30. Dorothy Norwood	I AM	A Wonderful Day
31. M. Brunson/TCC	WORD	Open Our Eyes
32. Mighty Clouds of Joy	REJOICE	I've Got My Mind Made Up
33. Pilgram Jubliees	MALACO	Bless Your House
34. Nicholas	COMMAND	Dedicated
35. The Richard Smallwood Singers	WORD	Portrait
36. John Kee	TYSCOT	It Will Be Allright
37. Gospel Music Workshop	SAVOY	Live In New Orleans
38. Witness	LECTION	We Can Make A Difference
39. Russ Taff - Take Six	WORD	Our Hymns
40. Darius Brooks	S.O.G.	Simply Darius

NOTE: This listing reflects radio rotation in some regions, not sales.



John Keys, Yolanda Adams, and Michael Brooks take a moment to pose at the Young Artist for Christ skating party held in Detroit, MI. (Pictured L - R)

Photo by May Williams

Three of the nationally known Truthettes take time to show there is always room for mom. Pictured L - R: Tammy Morgan, Velma Morgan, Amy Simmons, and "TuTu" Tiffanie Morgan Agee.

Photo by May Williams

Thomas Whitfield signs to the Benson label, which represents a homecoming for the award-winnning singer/songwriter/producer/arranger, who was on the Benson roster in the early 80's. Pictured L - R: Brian Spear, Whitfield's legal advisor; Ken Pennell, Benson senior director of A & R; Jerry Park, Benson General manager and chief operating officer; Thomas Whitfield (seated) ; and Robert Butler, Benson director of A & R.

Nashville, TN - Pictured are the 21st Annual Gospel Music Conference press conference hosts, Kim Boyce and BeBe Winans.

COULD THE RAPTURE BE FAR AWAY?

This past spring, two young ladies were on their way to the Apostolic World Fellowship Conference held every year in South Bend, IN.

While driving down the highway, they noticed a handsome, well-dressed, male hitchiker. For some strange and unknown reason, the two young ladies felt compelled to pick up the hitchiker. After asking him where he was headed, the young ladies told the hitchiker they were on their way to a church conference.

As the conversation continued, the hitchiker began asking the young ladies when did they feel Christ's coming would take place. One of the girls casually stated she felt Christ's coming wouldn't be for about another ten years. The other girl felt Christ would return in approximately the next five years. The girls found it strange that after each of their responses the hitchiker would say, "It'll be sooner than that." His final response to them was that Christ would be returning in the next two to three years and possibly before that.

When the gentleman made that comment, the girls looked at each other quite puzzled! As they turned around to ask him where he received his "revelation," the hitchiker had disappeared!

The young ladies were in such amazement over the hitchiker's dissappearance out of a moving car on the highway, they pulled over to the side of the road. A patrolman stopped to see if there was a problem. The girls told the policeman he wouldn't believe them, but he insisted on knowing what was troubling them. As they told him what they had just experienced, the patrolman told the young ladies he had heard the same story from fifteen other people that same week!

Are you ready?

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." *Hebrews 13:2*

- Lisa Tyson

NEW ALBUM RELEASE

Karen Clark-Sheard singing with the choir

The Voices of Victory, the Sanctuary Choir of Greater Victory Temple C.O.G.I.C., Jackson, Tennessee has just released a dynamic and soul stirring Gospel album. The album, features Karen Clark-Sheard of the Clark Sisters from Detroit, MI backed by the Gospel Explosion Mass Choir, a 300 voice community choir of Jackson, TN. The album which is entitled, "I Kept on Searching" is produced by Brandon B. Porter, pastor of the church, and Andrew Perpener, Jr., Minister of Music.

"With the collaboration of great musicians like Mance L. Aytchan, Titus Pollard, Karen Clark, Tina Watson and Brandon Porter, I am sure this album will be an inspiration and blessing to any and everyone who purchases it," stated Perpener.

Celebrating the album release from l to r: B.B. Winans, Brandon B. Porter, "Louis", Karen Clark-Sheard, Titus D. Pollard, Andrew Perpener, Jr.

Pictured Above:
Titus David Pollard, InstructorNew Musical Concepts

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What if we told you about an amazing young, gospel piano teacher, who is so dedicated that he has thousands of students? Would you believe that all of these students are learning to play at their own pace and in the privacy of their own home, and that this young man visits them when they feel like having a lesson?

This special piano teacher is Titus David Pollard of New Musical Concepts. His method of teaching was so unique and so well received by his private students that Bisho W.L. Porter of Memphis, Tennessee sponsored Mr. Pollard's endeavor to put his lessons on video.

NMC has received an overwhelming response since putting its home study video, "Learn How to Play Gospel Music", on the market in August 1989. It is so great that New musical Concepts has improved that look of the package and refined the lessons, The results is two separate volumes to take the novice from learning the musical alphabet to playing sounds in a short period of time.

"By carefully following the lessons on the video, it's not unreasonable for a beginner to play gospel music within a month," stated Titus. All you need is a VCR, piano and a desire to learn to play gospel music. NMC "Learn How to Play Gospel Music" can also be used for learning to play the keyboards.

Pollard has received many letters applauding his home study video, some as far away as Nigeria. We are looking forward to hearing great things from this talented musician.

New Musical Concepts is a Division of Greater Community Projects, a Memphis-based, nonprofit organization that helps the underprivileged tap into their inner talents and creative abilities.

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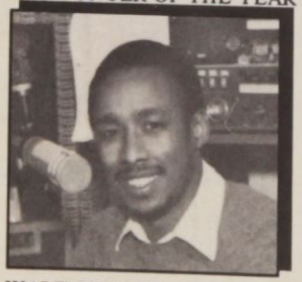

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"GOSPEL CELEBRATION"
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BONNIE DEE - GOSPEL MUSIC DIRECTOR FOR KRIZ - 1420 AM
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WOODRUFF, SOUTH CAROLINA
WASC - 1530 AM
SUNDAY, 6:15 AM - 1:00 PM
SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

CLC YOUTH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

Vanessa Bell Armstrong and Keith Pringle," Says Woodward.

In November, 1989, Woodward took the choir back into the studio to cut **Anchored to the Rock**, their first release on the Command label. "I feel like we have captured something really good this time, too," he says. It was mainly done in Berkeley at Spark Records, home of many recordings by Sheila E. and the Escovido Family, Windham Hill Records, Bernie Krause and numerous ABC-TV movie soundtracks.

Their summer 1990 "Anchored To The Rock Tour" kicked off July 8 in San Diego and stretches as far east as Detroit, MI. It already includes 20 markets, with more being added every day. "It is unashamedly very evangelistic and heavily geared to youth ministry," says Woodward.

Woodward adds, "We want to give a boost to youth departments everywhere and help as many young people find Christ as possible. It is far more to us than just the excitement of performing and recording, it is real ministry." The CLC Youth Choir is accompanied by youth evangelist, Jeff Garner, 22, who speaks at their appearances. ■

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RECORD REVIEWS

Troy Ramey and the Soul Searchers
Live
AIR

Macon, GA is the setting for this live recording from this veteran group. There'll be an abundance of hand-clapping and toe-tapping taking place after one listen to such favorites as **Great Change; Rain Keep On Falling Down** and **I've Been Picked Out To Be Picked On.** A must for anyone in tune to the soulful, southern sound of quartet gospel.

Wanda Nero Butler
New Born Soul
Secret/SOG

Put this LP on and get ready to rock. This live set, recorded in San Francisco, CA features hot, driving rhythms, a choir that won't quit, and Butler's power-packed vocal performance. It doesn't hurt to have Joel Smith and Jonathan DuBose, both noted for their work with the Hawkins family, as part of the 'posse.' **HIT PICK: New Born Soul, Hold On.**

Nu Colors
Man Within
Sparrow

This London, England based group's sound bares a striking resemblence to their native countrymen and r&b counterparts, Soul II Soul. Nice, smooth urban flavor dominates this LP. For traditional gospel enthusiast, check out their cover of **God Is Trying To Tell You Something** from the **Color Purple** soundtrack. **HIT PICKS: There's a wealth of good cuts to choose from.**

Transformation Crusade
Transformation Crusade
Benson

This is Benson's first actual venture into the world of rap music (they distribute the YO! Forefront label with DC Talk and E.T.W.). This Detroit, MI based group's debut features aggressive, hard-hitting street rap (reminiscent to P.I.D. & SFC) with a gospel message. Commissioned's Fred Hammond's hot production helps to make this project happen. Commissioned also makes a guest appearance, laying down some nice background vocal grooves. Another hot entry into the rapidly growing Christian-rap market.

Billy & Sarah Gaines
Friends Indeed
Benson

Husband/Wife duo vacates the MOR/Inspirational musical scheme for a more urban/contemporary flavor, meeting with positive results. Lending a helping hand are newly signed Benson group **Commissioned,** who can be heard vocally on the hot **While You Wait** and **Compromise.** The Gaines team are at their best on beautiful moving ballads. For a glimpse of their finely tuned vocal blends, listen closely to **Friends Indeed** and **Till The Day.**

Helen Baylor
Highly Recommended
Word/A&M

Baylor's debut release has hit written all over it. Album contains a heavy urban/contemporary sound showcasing the mature dexterity of Baylor's deep, rich vocal tones. If you didn't know it was Baylor, you would think that you were listening to Roberta Flack singing gospel. This former Rufus & Chaka Khan back-up singer has a rich feature in gospel and this LP is proof. HIT PICKS: **Highly Recommended; Lifting Up The Name of Jesus; There's No Greater Love; Victory; Thank You Jesus.**

RAPPER STEPHEN WILEY SIGNS AN EXCLUSIVE RECORDING CONTRACT WITH STAR SONG COMMUNICATIONS INTERNATIONAL

PICTURED AT THE SIGNING ARE: Jeff Mosley, Sr. Vice-President of Star Song Communications International and Stephen Wiley.

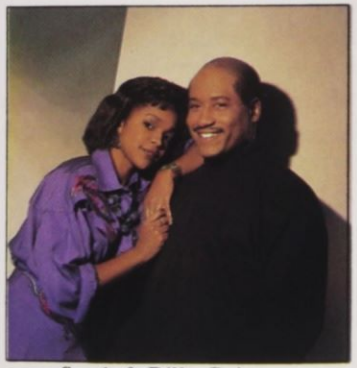
Stephen Wiley, known to many as the pioneer of Christian Rap has recently signed a recording contract with Star Song Communications International.

"Rap is the medium that is currently speaking to our youth culture," says Jeff Mosley, Senior Vice-President of Star Song. "I can't think of anyone more suited to use the medium than Stephen Wiley. His talents are large, but his heart for kids is even bigger."

Wiley has been instrumental in penetrating both suburban and inner city audiences with his bold and creative style of rap. By all accounts Wiley is one of the top selling artists of Christian rap and he is the only Christian rapper to be featured in SPIN, a national rock music magazine.

The Tulsa based artist released his next album titled, **RHYTHM AND POETRY** on Star Song in July. The project will be produced by Bret Teegarten.

BENSON'S FRESH VISION



Sarah & Billy Gaines

Transformation Crusade

The Benson Company has long been known as a strong forte in gospel music. Having a talented artist roster backed by an experienced and energetic staff of marketing, publicity and promotion people has made Benson a presence in all genres of Christian music. A few years ago Benson's Black Gospel division was one of the most respected rosters in the industry with such names as the Richard Smallwood Singers, Vanessa Bell Armstrong and The Clark Sisters.

These days with powerful talent such as Billy and Sarah Gaines, Albertina Walker, Commissioned, Vernessa Mitchell, Clifton Davis, Transformation Crusade and Thomas Whitfield, Benson is moving into the 90's with a renewed commitment to spreading the gospel through the best in urban Christian music.

"We began about a year ago with the signing of Commissioned and determined to develop a leadership role in the industry, music that will communicate to the black urban community," Benson's General Manager and Chief Operating Officer Jerry Park relates. "So we began to look for the best artist we could find and we have half a dozen or more and several in the wings." "Our commitment came out of the feeling that we were only speaking to part of God's people. If we're to do our job and fulfill our mission appropriately then we needed to create music that would speak to everybody. We're looking for ways to do that not just by signing artists and releasing records, but by becoming involved in the black community. This is a commitment that is hard by the other divisions of Zondervan."

In signing artists to help them achieve their goals Parks says they are looking for a broad expanse of artistry. They've put together a roster that includes both traditional artists and more urban-contemporary acts and also balances groups with

solo artists. But Park says above all they look for people with a commitment to spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

In looking at the acts on Benson's roster it's obvious they've achieved a combination of youthful exuberance and traditional experience that will serve the Lord well. Albertina Walker has been performing gospel music for nearly 40 years appearing at such prestigious venues as Carnegie Hall, Madison Square Garden, The Apollo Theater and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. The Chicago native was a member of the Caravans prior to embarking on a solo career.

She's been nominated for seven Grammy awards, been honored twice as "Best Female Gospel Singer" by the Gospel Music Workshop of America and received the PUSH International Woman of the Year Award. Her musical legacy includes such songs as "Please Be Patient With Me, God Ain't Finished With Me Yet," "I Can Go To God In Prayer," "The Best Is Yet To Come" and "Jesus Is Mine." Her Benson debut, You Believed in Me, released in July, promises to be an exciting new chapter in the life of one of gospel's premier entertainers.

Since signing with Benson in 1986, Billy & Sarah Gaines have become one of gospel music's most popular acts. The husband/wife duo established a powerful musical ministry with the release of their first two albums, Billy & Sarah Gaines and He'll Find A Way, and their current release, Friends Indeed, is further solidifying their place in the urban Christian marketplace.

Friends Indeed is the result of our decision to go back to our musical roots," Billy says of the project which marks a return to a more soulful R&B sound. The project has already yielded the hit, "While You Wait," which went to number one on Urban Christian Countdown America, CCM Update's CHR Radio Airplay chart, and CRR's CHR Radio Airplay chart.

Another exciting addition to Benson's roster is the recent signing of Clifton Davis. One of the most versatile entertainers in the industry, Davis stars as the Rev. Reuben Gregory on the NBC-TV

Commissioned

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